



Dec. 2, 2009

MyCustomer.com

Business Cloud Summit: NetSuite Announces Twittersuite

By Neil Davey

The inaugural Business Cloud Summit played host to meaty discussions and big announcements.

The great and the good from the world of Cloud Computing gathered yesterday, as London played host to the inaugural Business Cloud Summit.

A packed Royal Lancaster hotel played host to some meaty discussions about the obstacles to Cloud adoption and the economics of the Cloud platform, while keynotes from CEO of Salesforce.com Marc Benioff and CEO of NetSuite Zach Nelson topped and tailed the day.

Nelson created perhaps the biggest talking point of the day in his closing address, when he chose the Summit to be the platform to announce that NetSuite would be launching a Twitter suite, integrating the micro-blogging service into its program. And he also dropped a further bombshell, revealing that in the next fortnight NetSuite would announce the defection of two large SAP customers to its ranks - though he wouldn't be drawn on names at this time.

Meanwhile, in Benioff's address, the Salesforce.com CEO said: "We're seeing a big shift in computing. Applications delivered as a service...platforms delivered as a service... We're going to see a whole new software industry emerge. Salesforce.com has had tremendous success in the last year. We're seeing the power of Cloud Computing to make people successful even in tough economic times.

"The real question is are you going to build for the future or the past? Because if you're building for the future, you need Cloud Computing." He then invited attendees to carry on the Cloud discussion with him after hours, adding: "If you have any questions, email me at CEO at Salesforce.com."

Obstacles and economics

Meanwhile, Rebecca Wettemann reminded attendees that investment in the Cloud wasn't just about short-term ROI but about investing in the road ahead. And on the issue of investment, she warned the Summit that with CIOs losing credibility in the wake of the Y2K debacle and the economic climate creating greater pressure to reduce CapEx and an increased focus on payback and risk, organisations would have to build a water tight business case for Cloud Computing.

While CIO credibility had been highlighted as a possibly obstruction to Cloud by Wettemann, the CIOs themselves had a chance to discuss their involvement in the Cloud revolution in a later roundtable. Chairing the debate, Stuart Lauchlan noted that there are an alarming number of surveys indicating that the biggest inhibitor to Cloud development in both private and public sector organisations is the CIO themselves, many of whom are suspicious of this new technology.

The panel, which included Paul Cheesborough, CIO of the Telegraph Media Group; Alan Lee-Bourke, CIO of the Wise Group, Richard Britton IT Director of Easynet Connect and UK Online, and Andrew Jordan, CIO of Complinet, spoke of a variety of challenges, but agreed that some problems did exist within the CIO mindset.

“For so long, CIOs and CFOs have used issues like security and uptime availability as an excuse but that’s starting to wear thin,” noted Paul Cheesborough. “In the next three or four years, time will run out for those arguments and people will no longer be able to move the Cloud to one side”.

In other sessions, local government and education representatives and the shadow minister for science and innovation, Adam Afriyie, discussed the benefits of Cloud Computing in the public sector, while the director of the office of the government CIO, Martin Bellamy, gave the Summit delegates a progress report on the government’s G-Cloud, a Cloud-based infrastructure to support government business application.

Elsewhere, a panel of representatives from businesses - including Patrick Murray, CFO of Opta Sports Data, Ciara Hassan, HR Director of Lancaster Landmark Hotel Group, and Mark Charmer, co-founder at Akvo - shared their experiences of taking to the Cloud to run a variety of business critical processes.